

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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SUBJECT: RENE COOLS IT

1. SUMMARY: PREMIER LEVESQUE, AS WIDELY ANTICIPATED TODAY DELIVERED BLANDEST OF "INAUGURAL MESSAGES" TO OPENING SESSION OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. TONE WAS CONCILIATORY WITH PRIMARY EMPHASIS PLACED ON COMBATING HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT AND ON RE-JUVENATING ECONOMY. WITH SOME CAUTION, HE PREFACED REMARKS WITH CAREFUL ASSERTION OF INTERNATIONAL NATURE OF ECONOMIC CRISIS, BASIC SOUNDNESS OF QUEBEC ECONOMY, AND FACT THAT ALL PARTS OF CANADA HAD BEEN AFFECTED BY CURRENT CRISIS. END SUMMARY.

2. CONSTITUTIONAL AND SOCIAL REFORM WERE GIVEN SCANT ATTENTION IN LEVESQUE'S PROGRAM FOR 1978. HE SIMPLY STATED THAT ASSEMBLY WOULD BE CALLED UPON TO FURTHER CONSIDER REFERENDUM LAW, AND ENUMERATED LIST OF SEEMINGLY NONCONTROVERSIAL SOCIAL LEGISLATION TO BE INTRODUCED BENEFITING HANDICAPPED, AGED, CHILDREN, PRISONERS ANE WORKING MOTHERS.

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3. CLOSEST HE CAME TO CONTROVERSY WAS IN ANNOUNCING GOQ'S INTENTION PURSUE PLANS TO RESTRICT SALE OF AGRICULTURAL LAND TO REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS; PARTICULARLY EVIL FOREIGNERS. THIS WILL MAKE SOME FARMERS, DEVELOPERS AND FOREIGNERS UNHAPPY. HE ALSO HINTED AT ACTION BEING TAKEN AGAINST PRIVATE HUNTING FISHING CLUBS WHICH HAVE MONOPOLIZED SOME OF QUEBEC'S BEST HUNTING AND FISHING GROUNDS. NEITHER OF THESE MEASURES ARE

LIKELY AFFECT LARGE NUMBERS OR INTERESTS IMPORTANT TO GOQ.

4. LEVESQUE SAID THAT REORGANIZATION OF CERTAIN PARASTATAL COMPANIES WILL BE UNDERTAKEN IN COMING YEAR. LATTER WOULD INCLUDE MODIFICATION TO LAW WHICH GOVERNS HYDRO-QUEBEC AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE JAMES BAY REGION. GOQ WILL ALSO PRESS AHEAD WITH ITS PLAN TO PURCHASE CONTROLLING INTEREST IN ASBESTOS CORPORATION AND TO FORM A STATE OWNED ASBESTOS COMPANY.

5. ON A MORE POLITICAL NOTE, LEVESQUE SPOKE OF THE "DEEP DISAPPOINTMENT" CAUSED BY THE RECENT FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL ECONOMIC CONFERENCE. HE SPOKE OF QUEBEC'S EFFORTS, ALONG WITH OTHER PROVINCES, TO GET FEDERAL ORGANIZERS OF CONFERENCE TO FOCUS ON IMMEDIATE ECONOMIC CRISIS AND ON PRACTICAL MEASURE WHICH MIGHT ALLEVIATE IT. FEDS, HE ASSERTED, "DID NOT CONDESCEND TO ACCEDE NOR EVEN CLEARLY RESPOND TO ANY OF THESE REQUESTS."

6. LEVESQUE TRODE CAREFULLY IN DELICATE AREA OF CULTURE. HE SAID PROGRAM INITIATED BY FORMER GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN DEVELOPED TO POINT WHERE PACKAGE OF POLICIES, PROGRAMS, AND STRUCTURES WAS READY TO BE MADE PUBLIC. RATHER OMINUOUSLY, HE MENTIONED A NEW CINEMA LAW AND THE CREATION OF AN ORGANIZATION CHARGED WITH "VIGOROUSLY EXPANDING QUEBECOIS PARTICIPATION IN THE VAST CULTURAL INDUSTRIES WHERE THE INITIATIVE AND CONTROL, UNLESS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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STEPS ARE SOON TAKEN, WILL ESCAPE US COMPLETELY." IT WAS NOT CLEAR WHAT SPECIFIC MEASURES LEVESQUE MIGHT HAVE IN MIND. INEVITABLY, MANY MAY SEE SPECTRE OF CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTER, CAMILLE LAURIN, WHOSE RIGID INTOLERANCE WAS WELL DEMONSTRATED DURING PUBLIC HEARINGS LEADING TO ADOPTION OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGE LAW. (BILL 101).

7. FINALLY, LEVESQUE WARNED EMPLOYEES IN PUBLIC AND PARAPUBLIC SECTORS THAT THEY CAN EXPECT LITTLE IN WAY OF WAGE INCREASES WHEN THEIR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CONTRACTS COME UP FOR RENEGOTATION NEXT JUNE. PUBLIC SECTORS, HE SAID, CANNOT EXPECT ENJOY ADVANTAGES WELL BEYOND THOSE GIVEN REST OF SOCIETY WHO ULTIMATELY PAY THE BILL. LEVESQUE IS LEAVING NO DOUBT THAT PQ INTENDS ACQUIESCE TO FURTHER WAGE RISES UNDER PRESSURE FROM MILITANT PUBLIC SECTOR UNIONS. GIVEN PRESENT HARSH ECONOMIC REALITIES, THIS DECISION LIKELY BRING FAR MORE CHEERS THAN GROANS. MCNAMARA

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